

The Jesus Stuff Series Discussion Guides September - November 2022

WEEK I - Introduction



Teaching Text

Luke 6:46-49

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon kicked off our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, where we will examine the kind of disciples Jesus calls us to be by taking a deeper look at how He lived His life. Pastor Jon challenged us by asking why we settle for less than what Jesus offers us — a life on fire for Him. God longs to take our small devotions and fan them into a flame of faith, fueled by His unlimited power. As we receive this kind of power, we are called to live on what Pastor Jon refers to as ‘The Redemptive Edge.’ This is where the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness are constantly colliding, and it is where Jesus did most of His ministry. Radical discipleship in the way of Jesus is not just refraining from sin, but reorienting our whole lives around the person of Jesus. When we obey what He calls us to

do, resolving to not only learn from Him but act like Him, we move from participating in generic faith to living explicitly for Jesus. The Gospel is our invitation to burn with passion for the person of Jesus, and our call to the missionary adventure of reminding people of the beauty of the Jesus Stuff.

Discussion Questions

Connect

What is something you are looking forward to this Fall?

Character

Ask someone to read the teaching text (Luke 6:46-49) aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about Jesus' desires for His disciples?

Consider

1. What does the word discipleship mean to you? What has discipleship looked like for you in previous seasons?
2. Pastor Jon mentioned three things that have 'made his heart burn' for The Jesus Stuff (a quote, a principle, and a painting). What makes, or has made, your heart burn for Jesus?

Cover

This season we are focusing on discipleship in the way of Jesus and actually living out how He has called us to live in the world. Spend time (at the end or the beginning of your meeting) casting vision and setting goals for this next season of Community Group. Start by praying for the Holy Spirit to come and reveal what this can look like for your group throughout the Fall. Ask for courage and strength to not shy away from His promptings. Then, ask what group members hope to give/receive from this group, and what they want to commit to together.

Close by reading this prayer together:

Lord, we long to be disciples of Your Kingdom. Increase our desire to give all that we are to make Your glory known. Reveal any offensive way in us, that we may not be held back from wherever You lead. Teach us to live as You lived Jesus; make us a people about our Father's business. Strengthen our hearts to love as You loved, to move in faithful obedience no matter the cost. As we receive Your promised power, Holy Spirit, fill us with courage to carry Your fire forth. Amen.

WEEK II - Radical Obedience



Teaching Text

1 John 2:3-6

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, by posing three questions we can ask before we walk into any situation that will help lead us to live as Jesus did, not just abstain from sin. Throughout the gospels, we see Jesus heal after discerning where the Father is moving in a room full of need, go to places where no one expected God to move and bring revival, and put everything on pause to go after one man and lead him to Himself. By asking, "What is the Father doing?", before we enter into spaces, we both acknowledge that God is actively at work, and allow Him to lead us where He has been moving in advance to build His Kingdom instead of being overwhelmed or discouraged by need. Then, by asking, "Where the Father is doing it?", God can call us forward into spaces where the world's deep hunger and our deep gladness meet, and the Kingdom will break out. Finally, by asking, "Who is the Father giving me?", our eyes and hearts can be opened to the people God is giving us a spiritual responsibility for and embolden us to go after them with everything we have. As we pursue The Jesus Stuff, we must have faith that God is moving so we can join Him, listen for His promptings so we can hear His whispers of where to go, and move in radical obedience towards where He leads no matter the cost.

Discussion Questions

Connect

This season we are focusing on discipleship in the way of Jesus and actually living out how He has called us to live in the world. Each week, ask a few people to share either something that is 'making their burn' (encouraging or convicting them) for The Jesus Stuff, or a moment/experience from their week where they stepped out in faith to do The Jesus Stuff. (This can be anything from giving generously to praying for healing for someone in need, whether they're a stranger or a close friend.)

Character

Ask someone to read the teaching text (1 John 2:3-6) aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about the importance of keeping God's commands?

Consider

1. When is a time you felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to act or say something? How did He prompt you? Did you listen?
2. Pastor Jon shared a quote from Frederick Buechner that said, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." With this in mind, where do you feel like God is calling you?
3. Who has Jesus called you to intentionally pursue and invest in spiritually?

Cover

Cover individual prayer requests, and spend time asking the Holy Spirit to build your group's faith in God's movement, discernment for where He is asking each person to join Him, and strengthen everyone's obedience to go where He leads.

WEEK III - The Kingdom



Teaching Text

Mark 1:14-15

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, with a clarifying teaching on what the Kingdom of God actually is and what it looks like to seek it first in our world today. The Kingdom of God is the reality of God bringing about His will on earth. Before the Fall, God intended for humanity to bare His image and extend His rule and reign through us. When Satan tempted Adam and Eve, he stole our authority to manifest God's Kingdom in the world. Jesus, often referred to as the second Adam, defeated sin, Satan, death, and hell to reclaim and restore our relationship to God, and our authority to extend God's dominion over the earth.

This is the reality Jesus is announcing when He proclaims that the Kingdom of God is at hand, meaning it exists in both the 'now' and the 'not yet'. We are still waiting for Jesus' eternal rule and reign, but His Kingdom power is available to us now, calling us into expectation without agenda. We face resistance from false kingdoms of Satan (when he is removed as the source of evil and people demonize people instead of the spiritual forces at war around us), secularism (how the Christian faith became privatized by cultural norms), and the self (when our needs and desires are elevated over everyone and everything,

reducing faith to a self-help tool). In our current culture, to 'seek first' the Kingdom of God like Jesus calls us to, we must have an awareness that we are in God's story, not our story, an allegiance to Jesus as Lord over all, and an alignment to Jesus' will by daily asking where His Spirit is moving and how He is inviting us to join Him. The gospel of the Kingdom is a threat, and pursuing it will bring resistance into our lives, but we cannot do The Jesus Stuff without the Kingdom Stuff.

Discussion Questions

Connect

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Character

Ask someone to read the teaching text (Mark 1:14-15) aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about Jesus' priorities?

Consider

1. How has this teaching changed or challenged your idea of the Kingdom of God?
2. What 'false kingdom' causes the most resistance in your pursuit of the Kingdom?
3. Out of awareness of the Kingdom, allegiance to Jesus as Lord, and alignment to Jesus' will, which do you feel you need to increase more in as you seek the Kingdom of God?

Cover

Cover individual prayer requests, and spend time asking the Holy Spirit to reveal what you have been 'seeking first' in your life, and pray that He would show you how to reorient those areas back to the Kingdom of God.

WEEK IV - Healing



Teaching Text

Matthew 4:23-24

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.

Recap

This Sunday, guest Pastor Darren Rouanzoin continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, with a powerful and practical teaching on healing. When we look at the ministry of Jesus, it is clear that He prioritized preaching the Kingdom, healing the sick, and casting out demons, and as His followers, we are called to continue this ministry here on earth through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus spent so much of His time healing people that it was and still is the primary marker of the Kingdom of Heaven breaking in on earth. Today, the western church struggles to expect healing because a.) secularism has made us resistant to signs and wonders and accepting of a powerless lifestyle, b.) following Jesus has been turned in a lukewarm, convenient, consumer-driven affiliation, instead of a whole-life, whole-self allegiance to Jesus as Lord, and c.) the failure to make disciples that expect God to move like He has in the past. The reality is that Jesus' ministry of healing should be ordinary and expected in the life of His disciples, even though healing does not always take place. Through Jesus we have a mandate and a right to pray for healing, but we must be open and available for the Holy Spirit to move through. We can practice the ministry of healing with

confidence, trusting that God is not asking us to come with anything but our obedience, because it is His desire is to bring wholeness to His people again.

Discussion Questions

Connect

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Character

Ask someone to read the teaching text (Matthew 4:23-24) aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage tell you about how Jesus viewed healing in relation to His ministry?

Consider

1. What are some ways you tend to make Jesus into your own image when it comes to ministry? How can you shift your expectations to align with the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
2. What are some areas where you can reduce your busyness, and be more available to God to move through you?
3. How can you practically apply Jesus' ministry of healing in your day to day life?

Cover

Cover individual prayer requests, and spend time praying specifically for healing over people in the room using the model from the message that is outlined below.

A Model for Healing Prayer

1. Locate the sick person and place a hand on the person's shoulder.
2. Begin with Thanksgiving.

“Father, I thank you for (name), I thank you for your healing power and love.”

3. Speak to the condition and pray short prayers.

“In the name of Jesus, be healed!” If you want to get fancy, “In the name of Jesus, (leg), be healed!”

Tell the body what you want it to do, then give it instructions. “Neck pain be gone, muscles loosen, sickness leave.

Pray against any spiritual opposition.

4. Ask the person you are praying for how they are feeling. (If it’s something they can feel). If it’s better, praise Jesus, if not pray a few more times.

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WEEK V - Dependence



Teaching Text

Matthew 3:13-4:4

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, by diving into the importance of being dependent on the Holy Spirit and interdependent on the body of Christ. The world has fed us a lie that we can live independent and self-sufficient lives. but, in Genesis 1 and 2 God laid out the prototype for humanity as one of dependence. We were made to be dependent on God for life, identity, and purpose, and interdependent with other human beings to carry out God's work in the world. The life of Christ models how we can do this, and His death and resurrection enables us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. We can practice dependence by abiding in and obeying God's Word, by staying in step with the Spirit, and by learning how to be moved by His voice. Likewise, we become interdependent

with one another by recognizing our own needs, honoring and valuing one another, and seeking out those who invite us into doing The Jesus Stuff in our everyday lives. Pastor Suzy encouraged us to slow down and look for where Jesus is inviting us into greater dependence this week, and left us with a call to live our lives as Jesus did, as if the weakest among us were indispensable, because they are.

Discussion Questions

Connect

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Character

Ask someone to read the teaching text (Matthew 3:13-4:4) aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage say about our need to depend on the Holy Spirit and one another?

Consider

1. What areas of your life that make you feel the need to be independent? Why?
2. What do you think it means to fully rely on the Holy Spirit? What would that look like for you?
3. What are some ways we can practice depending on one another?
4. How can we increase our recognition of the value of others? (Especially those who are often forgotten or overlooked.)

Cover

Cover individual prayer requests, and spend time asking the Holy Spirit to show you where you need to rely less on yourself, and more on the Holy Spirit and those around you.

WEEK VI - The Secret Place



Teaching Text

Luke 5:15-16

Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, by taking a deeper look at the importance of communion with God in the secret place. The source of flourishing in Jesus' ministry was His consistent time withdrawing to the secret place to pray and spend time with His Father, and through His death and resurrection we also have access to this source of life. We live in a world obsessed with the public place, and the pressure to display our lives pushes us to give into social compulsions and burnout cycles of ambition, drive, and exhaustion, or ambition, escape, and numbing. However, Jesus maintained a rhythm of renewal of calling, withdrawal, and power by constantly hiding away in the secret place. Through the accounts of Jesus' life, we learn that time in the secret place will affirm and secure our identity in who God says we are, strengthen us to endure the hardships of this life without being shaken, and give us courage to walk through the chaos of our circumstances. The more time spent in the secret place leads to more power in the public place. To live out The Jesus Stuff, deciding how to abide daily, sabbath weekly, and adjust our time in the secret place in accordance with our season are key in getting into the secret place as often as we need.

Discussion Questions

Connect

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Character

Read the teaching text (Luke 5:15-16) together. Then ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What's your current version of 'withdrawing to a secret place' look like with God?

Consider

1. In Jeremiah 17: 5-6, Jeremiah speaks of men who draw strength from the flesh, or look to the world for their strength. What are some things the world provides that you currently draw strength/satisfaction from?
2. Pastor Jon mentioned Jesus' cycle of renewal of 'calling, withdrawal and power' which comes out of spending time being nourished in the secret place. What might that cycle look like/include if you were to adapt it into your life?
3. What's a moment where God has met you deeply in the secret place? How did He speak to you?
4. Who is a person you know with a strong secret place rhythm, and what does it look like?

Cover

Break out into groups of three or four and practice writing your own psalm, similar to Psalm 3. Pastor Jon read aloud, where you claim the Lord as your strength against the lies of the world. Read them a loud as you feel led!

Cover individual prayer requests, and ask for the Holy Spirit to reveal how/where you can carve out time this week to meet with God and seek Him.

WEEK VII - The Table



Teaching Text

Matthew 9:9-13

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, by digging into the most controversial aspect of Jesus's ministry: who He ate with. Jesus created space for people to encounter the Father's scandalous grace. He knew people ached to belong and to be seen for who they are, and that longing is still present in our world. In Jesus's time, meals were crucial to spirituality. It was a time to determine who was holy or unholy, and the table was also ranked socially. For Jesus to eat with tax collectors and other sinners was a disruption to the customs of His day and established the purpose of the table for the kingdom of God. Jesus' table was a place for welcome, healing, saving the lost, and reordering divine priorities. The church has always wrestled with the issue of inclusion and exclusion, but Jesus' vision was that His holiness is stronger than the worldliness around us. He was not afraid to touch that which was unclean because He knew He had the power to sanctify. The discussion around Jesus' table centered on sin, spiritual health, and forgiveness, meaning

His ministry of divine hospitality was not afraid to explore the depths. Ultimately, Jesus reflected the picture of heaven we're given in which we will one day gather around a beautiful feast of love.

Discussion Questions

Connect

This season we are focusing on discipleship in the way of Jesus and actually living out how He has called us to live in the world. Each week, ask a few people to share either something that is 'making their burn' (encouraging or convicting them) for The Jesus Stuff, or a moment/experience from their week where they stepped out in faith to do The Jesus Stuff. (This can be anything from giving generously to praying for healing for someone in need, whether they're a stranger or a close friend.)

Character

Read the teaching text (Matthew 9:9-13) together. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. From this passage, what can we conclude about the purpose of Jesus' ministry?

Consider

1. What does your mealtime rhythm look like on an average week? What is a practical way you can invite people in?
2. Pastor Jon shared the following quote: "If you can read the gospels without getting hungry, you aren't paying attention." Why do you think Jesus used the table as a pivotal part of His ministry?
3. What is the difference between Jesus's inclusiveness and the world's definition of inclusiveness?

Cover

Spend time asking the Lord to reveal the name of one person whom you can invite to share a meal or coffee with this week. Take time for group members to share the names of these people if they feel comfortable. Cover each person's upcoming meal and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal words or images they want to share with that person.

WEEK VIII - Justice Margin



Teaching Text

Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, with a teaching on the way Jesus used His margin to do justice and love mercy as He walked with God. Our culture has compartmentalized justice to certain jobs or times of year, but God was so intent on seeking a just people that He built ways for Israel to do justice into their daily lives. God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and gave them land as an inheritance, but then commanded them not to reap to the edges of their fields or go back over their harvest. The margin was to be left for the poor (the orphans, widows, and distressed, i.e. those whose fields were depleted) and the stranger (people without inherited land, i.e. the spiritual foreigner or seeker). As believers, we have also been given an unearned inheritance through Jesus, and portions of it are intended to be given away. Today, our 'fields' look like time, money, relationships, energy, thoughts, and emotions, and while our world tells us to maximize these areas, that is not the way of Jesus. Doing justice is an act of obedience, but Jesus' ministry was marked by His compassionate responses to the people who interrupted Him, displaying a love of mercy. He went above and beyond in His care for people to the point that He poured out His whole life, and He calls us to do the same. We follow a God that delights in showing us mercy, and He promises when we adopt His heart to do justice while loving mercy, we will be able to walk humbly with Him.

Discussion Questions

Connect

This season we are focusing on discipleship in the way of Jesus and actually living out how He has called us to live in the world. Each week, ask a few people to share either something that is 'making their burn' (encouraging or convicting them) for The Jesus Stuff, or a moment/experience from their week where they stepped out in faith to do The Jesus Stuff. (This can be anything from giving generously to praying for healing for someone in need, whether they're a stranger or a close friend.)

Character

Read Micah 6:8 and Leviticus 19:9-10 together. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What do you learn about the heart of the Father in these texts?

Consider

1. Pastor Suzy listed a few modern 'fields': money, relationships, energy, thoughts, and emotions. Which field is hardest for you to not 'reap to the edge'?
2. What would it look like to have margin in these spaces in the season you are in?
3. Who are 'the poor' and 'the stranger' in your life? How is God calling you to go above and beyond and delight in showing them mercy?

Cover

Spend time asking the Father to reveal where He has been merciful to you and give thanks. Then, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where He wants to restore your margin and how/where He wants you to give it away.

WEEK IX - God's Love



Teaching Text

Isaiah 56:4-6

For this is what the Lord says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant— to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—

Recap

This Sunday, guest teacher David Bennett continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, with a teaching on the radical and mysterious love of God. Framed under the idea that God has a love that is unique for every person, David shared his testimony of moving from an atheistic, gay activist, to becoming a follower of Jesus, who now advocates for a positive moral vision of biblical sexuality and discipleship. On his journey, he found that believers have to be willing to lay down every part of themselves, even sexuality, in the face of the Love that gave everything for them. This does not mean God will always answer every question, but He will always meet His people where they are, especially in suffering. David proposed that 'eros', (love in marriage or sexual relationships that the culture of the world emphasizes), is not the highest form of love. Instead, the 'greatest love', is a type of passionate 'eros' love that is sanctified by 'agape' (the self-sacrificial, grace-filled love Jesus shows for us). Desire in its original form is a good gift, and is promised to be fully satisfied when believers are in 'glorious oneness' with the Lord in eternity. This means that the

gracious gospel of Jesus that frees people from the weight of the law and sin is good news for everyone, everywhere, always. To follow in the way of Jesus, the church must commit to wrestling in the deep mystery of God's love, and work to include those in the LGBTQI+ community, not exclude them.

Discussion Questions

Connect

This season we are focusing on discipleship in the way of Jesus and actually living out how He has called us to live in the world. Each week, ask a few people to share either something that is 'making their burn' (encouraging or convicting them) for The Jesus Stuff, or a moment/experience from their week where they stepped out in faith to do The Jesus Stuff. (This can be anything from giving generously to praying for healing for someone in need, whether they're a stranger or a close friend.)

Character

Read Isaiah 56:4-6 together. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. How has David's sermon renewed your outlook upon this scripture?

Consider

1. Guest speaker David mentioned how the 'greatest love' is not in fact the kind of 'eros' love in marriage or sexual relationships, which the culture of the world emphasizes, but the type of passionate 'eros' love sanctified by 'agape' love (the self-sacrificial, grace-filled love Jesus shows for us). Have you wrestled with idolizing fallen 'eros' love before/what did that feel like? What has David's point illuminated regarding the temptation to idolize this type of love?
2. In Romans 1 and 2 Paul is speaking to the Jews about their posture towards the law that they were saying forbade Gentiles/many marginalized groups from being welcomed into the Kingdom. He says that the people judging them have the same sin as the others and the law can only be fulfilled/was fulfilled by Christ. When was a time in your life when you might have judged others while overlooking the fault in yourself? How can we use this lesson to better love/have faith-filled conversation with the LGBTQI+ community?
3. Guest speaker David mentioned how wrestling with God about his sexuality took him deep into the mystery of God. He mentioned that God doesn't always give him the direct answers that he wants, but God meets him in those questions. When has God met you like this before?

Cover

Spend a minute or two as a large group writing down names of people in your life who you feel led to pray for/have more conversations with after hearing this sermon. Popcorn pray for

the people, as well as ourselves that God may bridge any distance between them and the Kingdom and for us to be vessels of grace and love to them.

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WEEK X - Seeds



Teaching Text

Mark 4:30-32

Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, with a teaching on the Kingdom of God as a seed; small, slow, and weak, but enough to change the world. When Jesus first came to earth, many people missed Him, because of a preoccupation with what is bigger, faster, and stronger, and the same is true of our world today. However, Jesus teaches us that the Kingdom of God is more like a seed that starts small and when allowed to grow, can yield a great and eternal harvest.

As believers, we must ensure that we don't become so enamored with what our culture values that we miss out on Jesus too. We must learn to *see differently*, looking beyond the shallowness of the immediate and the impressive and instead strive for growth that is sustained by a long obedience in the same direction of our calling. We also need to *understand potency*, which is exemplified in the reality that Jesus' three short, but potent, years in public ministry changed human history forever. The size or length of something does not matter as much as the pure potency with which it is done. As Christians, we carry the most potent seeds of change in the world, the gospel. Just as many seeds are not needed to yield a harvest, it will not take many Christians to change the world, just an obedient and

intensely faithful few living lives of consequence. Carrying Kingdom seeds also means bearing the responsibility to *steward it seriously*, remembering that the potency of the seeds is not in us, but rather in the space we create in our lives for them to take root. What we do with the seeds of the Kingdom determines what happens to them, and we are called to sow *generously*, scattering seeds indiscriminately on all kinds of soil, like Christ did. God is constantly at work to bring His Kingdom to earth, and He calls us to sow faithfully and potently into the lives of others because we never know where or how the seeds will grow.

Discussion Questions

Connect

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Character

Read Mark 4:30-32 together. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage teach us about Jesus' priorities?

Consider

1. Can you identify a distraction or temptation in your life right now that might be blinding you to the Kingdom? What can you do to remove this distraction and build accountability?
2. What is one "small" Kingdom thing you think God might be asking you to be faithfully sowing into? How can you steward it generously?
3. Living in New York, we often celebrate those who are doing "big" things, but who do you know that is living out the quote that Jon mentioned from Mother Teresa on Sunday? "*Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.*" How can you honor and encourage that person this week?

Cover

Spend time asking God to reveal where He wants you to sow seeds for His kingdom. Pray for each other and ask for grace and humility to not despise the small things, but to know God's presence in the ordinary and mundane as well as the spectacular.

WEEK XI - Truth



Teaching Text

John 8:31-45

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!"

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Ashley concluded our Fall sermon series, The Jesus Stuff, with a teaching on truth, not as an ideological framework, but as the person of Jesus. In His compassion, Jesus offered freedom to the Jews who believed in Him, but they questioned His gift because their hearts were unable to make room for truth. Through this, we learn that believing is not enough. We must not just agree with truth, we must also live with truth at the center of our being. We can make room in our hearts for truth by clearing out the things that war against it: the father of lies, empty religion, and false security. Pastor Ashley proposed

that the devil's primary strategy against us is to trade truth for lies. Jesus makes a way for us to replace lies for truth, but we must make room for truth. For both ourselves and those around us to experience true freedom, we must elevate the Author of our faith over the symbols of our faith, and push past familiarity to cut through a false sense of security. Jesus promises that when we abide in God's Word, we will know His truth, and His truth will set us free.

As we close out our Fall sermon series, Pastor Ashley reminded us that the question is not how The Jesus Stuff fits into our lives, but how our lives fit into the stuff Jesus is doing today and all throughout history. Jesus calls us to make room in our calendars, our budgets, and our lives for the work He desires to do in our world.

Discussion Questions

Connect

This season we are focusing on discipleship in the way of Jesus and actually living out how He has called us to live in the world. Each week, ask a few people to share either something that is 'making their burn' (encouraging or convicting them) for The Jesus Stuff, or a moment/experience from their week where they stepped out in faith to do The Jesus Stuff. (This can be anything from giving generously to praying for healing for someone in need, whether they're a stranger or a close friend.)

Character

Read John 8:31-45 together. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does the passage teach us about Jesus' intentions for our lives?

Consider

1. Our primary weapon against the devil is to believe truth over lies. Can you identify lies in your life that the enemy might be speaking to you? What truths from scripture can you replace those lies with?
2. Are there any areas you have taken the substance of faith and replaced it with symbols of faith? Where do you find yourself loving what God can offer you more than God Himself?
3. Pastor Ashley said, "Truth is too good not to sound good to us. Truth should knock us out every time we hear it, because it's that good." Where in your spiritual life have you become complacent with truth?

Cover

Spend time in prayer asking the Lord where the three enemies of truth might have a foothold in your life (lies, empty religion, or false security). Relinquish these areas to God and give

them over to Him in confession. Then ask the Lord how you can make room for truth in your life.

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